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What is an SOP?

- Demonstrates your competencies
- Contextualises your experience and knowledge
- Shows you are capable of handling the course load
- Says that you are fit; why do they need you as much as why you want to study the course

SOP is also an academic document

- Goal-oriented and persuasive
- Has a theses: what and why/how
However,
- Balancing the "personal"+ "impactful data point"
- Demonstrated preparedness + willingness to learn further (*Be specific*)

Who reads your SOP?

- Experts in your field; use appropriate technology
- Your prospective supervisors; make connections
- Used to reading application; contextualise

Research

Is this the right program? Are your justifications convincing?

Take a Step by Step Approach

Background Research	Brainstorm	Outline	Draft	Edit
<p>Get your research questions and field sorted</p> <p>Understand the orientation of the departments and professors' research</p>	<p>Situate your research in the Departments you have chosen</p> <p>Find the questions you want to answer in the SoP</p>	<p>Delineate the relevance of present coursework and past experiences to future research goals</p> <p>Feasibility of your research</p>	<p>Start writing (it won't be perfect)</p> <p>Aim to get everything on paper</p> <p>There will be multiple drafts</p>	<p>Remove the fluff</p> <p>Get feedback</p> <p>Proofread</p>
			<p>Personalise SoP for each school</p>	



Proofreading: No contractions. Consistent spelling

In the University/Department website

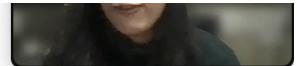
- What does the programme entail?
- Do they match your requirements/skills/education so far?
- Professors and offered courses
- Alumni (who is selected, what do they do after)
- Informal preferences of the programme
- Allied departments
- Objectives/mission of the university
- External/application related resources



What are the informal choices of this program? Look at the work of PhD students.

Deconstructing SOP Prompts

Past-Present-Future Framework



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A STATEMENT OF INTEREST IS A CRUCIAL PART OF MOST GRADUATE SCHOOL APPLICATIONS.

It may also be called a "statement of intent", "description of research interests" or something similar. Basically it is your opportunity to tell the graduate program:

- Your specific area of academic interest (research topic you want to work on)
- How your past education and other experiences have prepared you to be successful in the graduate program
- What you hope to achieve in the graduate program
- Why this particular program at UBC is the best place for you to pursue your interests

The statement is generally in the form of a short essay. Be sure to carefully read the specific instructions given by the graduate program and ensure you provide them with what they are asking for. Please contact the program you are applying to if you have any questions on the content of your Statement of Interest.

Other tips for a strong Statement of Interest:

- State any work you have done in this area already (mention specific skills/techniques you have picked up).
- Connect your area of interest to work being done in the program (mention specific faculty members and projects).
- Refer to academic publications that have informed your interest (use correct citation as footnote).
- Mention any publications, presentations or conferences you have been a part of.

REMEMBER: YOU ARE BUILDING A CASE THAT YOU ARE FOCUSED, SKILLED, ENTHUSIASTIC, AND A GREAT MATCH FOR THE PROGRAM.

Your voice brings the personal side in the academic things you say. There should be an intricate connection between the two.

Envisioning a Narrative

- How do you want your SOP to be structured?
 - Chronological
 - Thematic -- the microscope example
 - Goal-oriented -- race and social justice
- Create a narrative thread/logical structure: professionalise your interests
- Aim to write whatever you feel is relevant

General suggestions

- Do not overshare!
- Editing is writing
- Let your first draft be terrible

Paragraph Framework 1

Paragraphing Framework 1

Experiences> **skills gained**> (where you've applied them)> **why this matters for the “good fit” question or why the university would consider this**

(incorporating the university consistently)

Went to conference -> Gained skills and insights -> applied by writing a paper -> why the university would consider this

After graduating Bryn Mawr College as a Posse Foundation Scholar, I recognized the transformative potential that a quality education has on the lives of students who are products of under-resourced school districts. During my time at Bryn Mawr I took classes such as Race, Gender and Culture and The Black Self: Identity and Consciousness which dissected race and social identity from a perspective that allowed me to better understand systemic racism and how communities of color shape and mold their consciousness. These courses, coupled with complex conversations about race and social justice, stimulated my passion to combat the forces and mindsets that continue to disadvantage minority youths. My involvement as a Posse Scholar fueled my determination to empower students and led me to become a freshman peer mentor to first-generation and international students during my senior year. While pursuing my undergraduate degree, I had the opportunity to produce an independent qualitative thesis entitled, The Role of Communication in Developing Bryn Mawr College Students' Religious Identity. I obtained invaluable analytical skills, utilized various methods of collecting qualitative and quantitative data, and became inspired to eventually refine my research skills at the graduate level. My multifaceted experience as a student motivated me to pursue a career in education nonprofits.

Paragraph Framework 2: The Onion

Paragraphing Framework 2: The Onion

- A hook
- **segue** to your background in the field
- specific classes by title and professors you have had (especially if well-known in the field)
- related extracurricular activities (especially if they hint at some personal quality you want to convey)
- any publications or other professional accomplishments in the field (perhaps conference presentations or **public readings**)
- **explanations about problems in your background** (if needed)
- why you have chosen this grad school (name one or two professors and what you know of their specific areas or some feature of the program which specifically attracts you).

Hook *Looking through the eyepiece of a microscope, I was amazed to see the individual cells of a sea urchin embryo. In my high school cell and molecular biology class, we were studying the cell cycle and we had the opportunity to harvest embryos from sea urchins to view under the microscope. I had used a microscope before, but only to look at prepared slides containing preserved tissue samples. This was my first time viewing a live sample that I had prepared myself. This experience opened my eyes to the wonders of cell biology and how our scientific world has been expanded with the technology of microscopes. I knew that I wanted to continue to incorporate microscopes into my own learning and to learn as much as I could about cells and their inner workings. With Brown's Open Curriculum, I am excited to broadly study biology while also diving deeply into the world of cell biology. The excitement I felt when looking through the microscope at a sea urchin embryo is one that I look to bring with me to Brown as my classmates and I embark on expanding our academic horizons and building the foundation needed to be successful in our future scientific careers.*

Past
classes

Segue

Why
this

school

Introductions

Anecdote as Introduction

An emaciated 'native' soldier stood against the map of British India in an army recruitment poster designed during World War I. "The Empire enthusiastically contributed men and materials to His Majesty's war effort" claimed the plaque underneath, brushing aside centuries of oppression. A little footnote. That is how the lives of millions of soldiers from European colonies have been immortalized at the Imperial War Museum in London, condemning them to invisibility. This was not the first time I had noticed that history is not a politically neutral sequence of events as textbooks claim. It is a deliberately constructed narrative that reflects inequalities in power. Walking through this museum was one of the many moments in my life I have used to fuel my dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the status quo. The desire to highlight suppressed voices is what draws me to critical and post-colonial approaches to International Relations. Political research, I realized, has immense emancipatory potential.

Body

Impact of a module; not necessarily the content of the course

Writing Conclusions

Department comes in the end

Editing

Layers of Edits

- Macro edits (redefine, re-conceptualize) : **clarity about the disciplinary/cross disciplinary “problem” that motivates you**
 - Structural edits (organization and “articulation” of problem)
 - Micro edits
 - Standardisation and ‘hygiene’ check
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Structure within Paragraphs: Paragraphs as Units

Note the following:

1. What is this paragraph supposed to do?
 2. Topic/key idea of the paragraph? Will my reader have difficulty finding the topic sentence?
 3. What examples do I use to illustrate my key point? Can I use better examples, reasons, or details?
 4. Are there adequate **transitions** between sentences and paragraphs? Are **transitions** varied or are they all the same kind?
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How to stick to the word count?

Exceeded:

- Have I included only relevant information?
- Is there any unnecessary repetition in my assignment?
- Is my written expression as clear and concise as possible, or is it too 'wordy'?

I don't have enough words:

- Have I fully answered the question or task?
- Do I need to read more? Should I include more information or discussion?
- Have I provided enough evidence to support my argument/s?